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U.S. DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Thursday, October 31, 1935

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "WAR ON WEARINESS." Information from the Extension Service, U.S.D.A.

--ooOoo--

I have some war stories to tell you today. And I think you'll be interested even if you happen to be a member of the Peace League and a pacifist by nature. The battles I'm talking about are on the home front. And the warriors are women -- housekeepers, as a matter of fact. The enemy they are fighting is fatigue.

Of course, we women have always had that enemy to fight. Nothing new about that. But recently some American housewives have gone in for scientific warfare and are fighting in trained ranks. When we attack an ancient enemy with these modern weapons, we have hope of winning.

Last year women in 3 counties in New York State declared war on weariness. They banded together in home demonstration groups to study common causes of fatigue and ways to overcome, or at least reduce it. They had the help of the State specialist in home management in this study.

Well, these women discovered a good many reasons for fatigue in their lives that they hadn't even been aware of before. For example, one found that worry made her more exhausted than any amount of work -- worry and also a feeling of pressure or confusion. Several other tired homemakers discovered that they weren't allowing themselves enough sleep at night. Some members of the group got tired easily because they were working in a poor light or without good ventilation. Maybe you never thought that weariness might come from clothes. Well, some of these women reported that uncomfortable clothing such as tight bands, poorly fitted girdles, and especially the wrong shoes were responsible for that tired feeling long before the end of the day. Still other housewives found that their trouble was too little outdoor exercise and sunshine. Bad posture was still another forerunner of fatigue. All these women agreed that over-fatigue makes for a good deal of unhappiness, not only for the tired person but for those around her at home.

These New York State women in their anti-fatigue reports voted ironing as the most tiresome housekeeping job, with washing a close second. Dish-washing got the vote as the most unpleasant daily job. So they set about finding ways to make these tasks easier and pleasanter. Each member studied her own method of work and her own home. One woman who had had special trouble with an exhausted right arm on every ironing day found a remedy for it in a new labor-saving iron rest. A good many found that their weariness came from the height of their boards. Some ironing boards needed raising and some lowering to suit the height of the ironer. Then, many members discovered that they could prevent

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much back-ache, tired feet, and so on, by the simple method of sitting down to do their ironing. So they invested in stools and saw to it that these were of a comfortable height, too. Some found that a stool with a low back was a great help. A rubber mat relieved those who grew tired at standing jobs like washing and dish-washing. One member had her kitchen window fixed so that it would open from the top and give better ventilation. Another changed her plan of work so that all the heavy jobs didn't fall on one day but were spread out during the week. Several discovered that better light on their ironing board or wash tub or sink made the work easier.

One woman who moved into a new house had new windows cut over a new sink--and had the sink installed at just the right height for her. Most of the groups found that when they varied their tasks and took rest periods or even some recreation between them, the work was easier and less wearisome.

But that's the report of the battle on only one front. Home demonstration women in Kentucky have been fighting the same fight. In Warren County last year the clubs had 2 big meetings on housekeeping-time savers. At the first meeting 170 women learned how to make and use home-made furniture washes, polishes and floor wax. They made 100 dustless dust-cloths and many dustless mops. Some also made easy floor polishers and convenient cleaning kits. The different small clubs had a series of window washing contests trying out different methods of doing this job to see which was the quickest and best.

At the second meeting they studied housekeeping tools. Long-handled cleaning tools were the favorites. Brooms, mops, and polishers all proved most comfortable if they were 5 feet long and allowed the housekeeper to stand comfortably erect as she used them. The specialist urged the women to make every effort to keep from stooping, to sit down in doing as many jobs as possible, and to stand comfortably at the others.

Kentucky women like New York State women generally agreed that they dislike dishwashing most of all housekeeping tasks. One woman made a study of dishwashing in her home and found that by changing her methods and her kitchen just a little she could save 16 minutes every time she washed dishes. She figured that 16 minutes multiplied by 3 meals a day and 365 days a year means a considerable saving of good time to her. Well, here's what she did to make her dishwashing quicker and easier. She bought a good wire dish-drainer to save wiping the china. She put up shelves near her sink for the dishes instead of using a dish cupboard way across the room which meant walking back and forth to put the dishes away. She used a tea wagon on rubber-tired wheels to help in carrying the soiled dishes to the kitchen. She also used this as a convenient extra table when she needed more space in the kitchen. She fitted her drawers with partition boxes to hold silver. And she hemmed a dozen good absorbent pieces of dish-toweling so she would never run short of dry towels.

You see what little easy weapons you can use to make a successful war on weariness. Some day soon I'll tell you what women in other parts of the country are doing.

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